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ONWARD:

A Lay of the West.

“The Wilderness shall blossom as the Rose.”—HUMPHREYS.

BY •

A. W. PATTERSON.



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BY A. W. PATTERSON,

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REMARKS.

THE object here has been, to sketch a hasty picture of our great and growing West, at this period of its magical progress, while the mighty strides of settlement being made are causing every frontier solitude to ring more than ever with the settler's ax, and the ever-Rising Village to greet the eye. As well, at the same time, while looking with wonder and admiration on the scene, to contemplate the true beginnings of a Government like ours, the rudimental sources of a people's greatness, and the consequent growing fortunes of our country.

SEPTEMBER, 1869.





ONWARD.

MIDST tangled wildwoods, or in prairie nook,
Beside some pleasant stream, or winding brook,
tr Mirrored with wild flower on the wavelets' breast,
Gladdening some fertile region of the West,
Where settler's cabin only late has been,
The beauteous RISING VILLAGE may be seen!

The curling smoke ascending through the trees—
The sounds of workmen coming on the breeze—
The clustering buildings *gaily & bravely* busily rearing there—
The saw-mill grating on the troubled air—
The hum of voices—the occasional song—
The shout, the laugh among the merry throng—

With all the mingling tumult on the ear,
Proclaim, indeed, that village life is here!

Silence no longer o'er the valleys broods,
Echo reverb'rates through their solitudes;
Around is heard the ax-man's measured stroke,
And far prevails the awe of stillness broke!

The wild deer, startled, leaves the lowland brake—
Water-fowl, screaming, quit the marshy lake—

The bison bounds away with matchless might—

The wolf, dismayed, is skulking from the sight—

The Indian, too—no less a wild-like race—

Resigns, though more reluctantly, the place.

Saddened in heart, with mute and steadfast gaze,

He lingers mournfully o'er the wildering maze.

See! how with wonder in his troubled eye,

He marks that spire up-rising, strangely high;

Surveys the restless, creaking mill-wheel turn,

And strangers' curious skill with deep concern;

Around are closing in the white man's fields,

He, ^{his} even in turn, at length dominion yields!

And goes, disturbed, the early hunter too;
 Following his game, he thrids the wilds anew!
 Beside yon springlet where the alder grows,
 His shapeless cabin unfrequented rose.
 The idling savage but his casual guest,
 He lived as loved the daring hunter best.
 But now more distant depths of solitude
 Are sought, where hum of life may not intrude;
 His dogs and gun, companions of his way,
 The restless LEATHER-STOCKING of his day!²

While here, perchance, where early Jesuit trod
 To tell the Indian of the Christian's God;
 Perchance, where resting on his toilsome tour,
 By gleaming camp-fire, sang the *voyageur*,
 The venturous spirit of our people reigns,
 And crowds are gathering over hills and plains.
 Some from New England's joyous, purling rills—
 Some from the Alleghany's wide-spread hills—
 Some from more Western vales, or Southern slopes—
 Some where the high Canadian landscape opes;

Others, as well, from Europe's peopled shores,
 Where Rhine, or Rhone, his ancient current pours;
 Where Norway frowns, Italia's Summer smiles,
 The Celt and Saxon plow the British Isles:
 But vain to tell whence severally they hail,
 The wide world sends them from each hill and dale!³

"Ho! Westward, ho!"—From clime and kindred gone,
 Westward the Star of Promise guides them on!
 And whether from trans-oceanic strand,
 Or hills and valleys of our own broad Land,
 Whether their zeal in foreign accents rung,
 Or in the vigor of our Anglo tongue,
 Gathered beneath the blue, encircling skies,
 They sound the busy note of enterprise;
 Unite their labors, and, delighted, rear
 The prosperous village in the far wilds here!

Lured where adventure loves to bid them hie—
 Lured by the freedom of a frontier sky—
 With hearts of joy, enkindled, hopeful glance—
 The very heroes of a true romance!

The bright Dorado of their dreams attained—
 The wondrous West with all its greatness gained—
 A newer life each quickened pulse declares,
 And toils and trials turn to pleasant cares!

Far through the listening, tangled woods,
 Where scarce a wandering villager intrudes,
 The sounds of busy population swell,
 And die away but in the distant dell!
 Some shout "hurrahs," as on the work is pressed;
 Some lighten labor with the glee of jest;
 Some, ever garrulous as they are loud,
 Hold noisy prattle with the gathering crowd;
 But various as their varying moods appear,
 They still buzz on in strangely wild career!

A wonder often wakens in the eye,
 So great the turmoil, so intent they ply;
 The coming stranger, with a slackening pace,
 Pauses to gaze in silence on the place;
 The gray-haired woodsman, visiting the town,
 Lingers in mazement till the sun is down!

Buildings around on every hand are seen
 Ascending, as by magic, o'er the green.
 The cabin rises by the spreading shade,
 As well, the dome that looks o'er grove and glade.
 With many a structure architect ne'er planned,
 The homely fashion of a border land,
 Till looms the village in the evening sun
 Greater, as each succeeding day is done!

And while the busy builders fill the air
 With ceaseless echoes of their restless care,
~~There is~~ ^{is seen} a stir of trade around the "Store"—
 The mill-wheel rumbles by the sedgy shore—
 The blacksmith's anvil rings, his bellows blows—
 The teamster brawls and whistles as he goes—
 The salesman shouts adown the crowded street—
 The jockey clamors where the loitering meet—
 The speculator talks of corner-lots—
 The marksman wagers on his sounding shots—
 The school-room, even, mingles in its cares—
 The lawyer pettifogs—the gambler swears—

The quack boasts skill—the preacher talks of sin—

The cobbler beats an *alto* to the din!⁴

While many another, busied not in vain,

Whate'er his part, as loudly strikes for gain.

For here are ~~most~~ ^{busy} the tricks and trades of life

Already, gathered in a rival strife,

Forming, as only in *our* Country known,

With inborn independence but their own,

A throng of restless, active spirits, who e'er

In ceaseless bustle through the day strive there.

Yon late-swung sign-board telling to the eye

Of coming stranger, as the night draws nigh,

That there a welcome and repose are found.

And generous hospitalities abound!

Thus hum the ever-active hours away,

The noisy tumult of the eager day,

Unceasingly, while echoing far and long,

Is borne the cadence, as of mighty song!

A town is reared like fabling lips might tell,

A people formed as by enchanter's spell;

The varied rounds of life at once begun
 Midst startled solitudes, ere set the sun!
 A greatness, grandeur, wonder, and a might,
 Where such ennobling energies unite.⁵

Still rising, as the settler's ax is swung
 By swelling hosts with hardy sinews strung;
 A forest of unnumbered ages fades
 Around, with its interminable shades.
 Inclosing fields unfold a dress of bloom,
 The breezes bear a burden of perfume;
 Till hailed the land prophetic words disclose—
 "The Wilderness shall blossom as the Rose!"

A lovelier scene than limned by art of rhyme:
 Then pipes the partridge in the harvest time—
 Then calls the crow where forests once were dense—
 Then barks the squirrel by the cornfield fence—
 Then hums the honey-bee the wild flowers o'er—
 Then springs the plantain by the settler's door—
 Then sings the whippowil at evening's close—
 Joyous companions where the white man goes!⁶

More striking* change than eye is wont to meet,
 Or ear be startled with in wild retreat!
 The sturdy mountaineer, to find a mart
 For pelts and furs, and goods of savage art,
 Perhaps, approaching in his rude canoe,
 Suspends the paddle with astonished view!
 The wandering buffalo, the wild mustang,
 Following the ancient pathways of the gang,
 Perchance appear, but with bewildered sight,
 A moment gaze and turn with fleeter flight!⁷

Erewhile, and peradventure, not a year,
 The Indian trader only sojourned here.
 But his rude hut—his store of tinsel goods,
 A distant outpost in the primal woods,
 Soon gathered round it men of iron frame,
 Who loved the freedom of the wilds, and came;
 Their cabins rising one by one around,
 Within the shadows of the forest's bound;
 Until the stir of moving numbers neared,
 As wave on wave the coming crowd appeared;

When rose the place with strangely rapid speed,
In village order, village pride, indeed:
A louder hum, and noises manifold
Disturbing every forest haunt and hold!

Thus springs the village of our genial vales,
A germ of promise every bosom hails;
Thus springs the glory of our budding clime,
From Northern lake to region of the lime,
In valley, woods, on prairie, iris-spanned,
The boast and marvel of our pristine land.

Born of that daring spirit that hither brought
The hardy builders, with such earnest fraught;
Like them in boldness, eagerness, and zeal,
It springs the pattern of the might they feel!
The youthful Titan of the age, the hour,
Building to sturdy strength the Nation's power!

Since earliest reared in Indian solitudes
Of wild Virginia, or in Plymouth woods,

Still rising Westward with auroral light,
 It marches ONWARD where new climes invite!
 Gives birth successively to each new State,
 As grow our people and our Union great!
 Gives further scope to enterprise and art,
 Industrial courage and the bounding heart;
 A wider range to bolder, budding Mind,
 Still more American in cast and kind!

In it our humble virtues had their rise,
 Our native freedom, native enterprise;
 In it our early sires were born and nursed;
 In it our heroes thrilled with greatness first;
 In it awoke the impulse to progress;
 In it was dreamed the glory of success;
 Grew strong our nationality and will,
 Our youthful grandeur, ever rising, till
 Outshone accorded splendors of to-day,
 Dazzling, though yet but in their morning ray!

Hence goes the wonder over land and sea;
 Hence springs our proud and peerless sovereignty,

Our glorious birthright of the very air,
 To breathe, to act, as only freemen dare!
 Proclaimed, where frets the wildwoods on the light,
 Or village-dome towers, glistening on the sight.

ONWARD, trans-continental in its rise,
 A nation's herald of its energies!
 Our dark, old forest nodding to the breeze,
 Our lakes and rivers, like extended seas;
 Our rolling prairies, broad as ocean tide;
 Our climates, varied as our land is wide—
 Invite the infant village still to build;
 In it the measure of our hope is filled!

And could the eye some distant day behold
 How many a change the future might unfold;
 Improvements following in the march of Mind,
 As in the village growing great, refined!
 Those streets, perchance, as yet without a name,
 Our course distinguished, may yet proudly claim
 The finished structures of becoming pride,
 Where ease, content, and competence preside!

On that bright stream, where smiles the ether's blue,
 Erewhile, but skimmed by Indian's light canoe,
 The whitening sail may spread before the wind,
 And steamer freight the stores of "either Ind."
 Through yonder darkling wilderness of woods,
 Where gloom of solitude and silence broods
 The steam-car yet may whiz o'er hill and dell,
 With many a wild and far-alarming yell,
 Crossing a continent, with giant sway,
 From sea to sea-board in a single day!
 The flashing wire, thrown round the captive earth,
 Bind us with men of every tongue and birth!
 The commerce of a world here yet prevail,
 Exuberant plenty o'er the land to hail!
 The snow-white villa spring upon the eye,
 Suburban prospects greet the passer-by;
 Returning harvests yield redoubled store,
 In generous surplus to the millions more!
 Our poets, statesmen, sages, even then,
 In more than Grecian, Roman age again,
 Reared on the bosom of a fruitful zone,
 Declare their country's greatness in their own!

And while abundance gathers yearly hence,
 And joys of plenty o'er the land dispense;
 While intellectual energy keeps pace,
 Refinement following with its ease and grace,
 Fear not luxurious opulence obtain,
 To rule, oppressive, with its blighting train.
 Though wealth accumulate, still haply may
 The many flourish, nor their joys decay.
 The guardian virtues hover ever near,
 And equal rights and equal good appear.
 The Genius of our happy land provides,
 As o'er our Institutions she presides,
 No Auburn griefs shall over-gloom the soil,
 Nor peasant's pangs commingle with his toil;
 The poor man still shall claim his "rood of ground,"
 Nor foreign title, foreign pomp be found.⁸

Such glorious destiny the raptured eye
 Would trace in living letters on the sky!
 The breezes sing it where the forests bloom;
 A spirit breathes it through their quiet gloom!

Each hopeful bosom feels alike, no less,
 Impressed with images of such success;
 Sees rising round the earnest of renown,
 E'en manifest, as turrets of the town.

Not a mere nation's greatness it proclaims,
 A world's redemption follows in its aims.
 The blessèd liberalism it yields the age,
 Mankind's emancipation may presage.
 Freedom of conscience, everywhere, will date
 The universal charter to be great!

Though few and fameless, yet the scenes known here,
 Events of moment will at length appear.
 Here will love, hatred, jealousy, and crime,
 Secure their triumphs, do their deeds in time.
 And other passions that impel the breast—
 Ambition, fame—the meteors of unrest—
 Enstamp their many histories on the place,
 For good or evil, glory or disgrace!

Ere yet the mossy, old, dim forests round
 Have disappeared to yield the fallow ground,
 The log-built cabin moldered to decay,
 The stately mansion crowned the future day,
 These varying billows will have swept the heart,
 And joy, or sorrow, been the portioned part.

Where swings yon sign-board to the passing breeze,
 Will smile the landlord still with art to please;
 The village statesmen, round the evening fire,
 Discuss the topics of the day, nor tire;
 The gay and youthful, congregated there,
 Cherish the hour they gathered there to share;
 E'en, parting blessing of the traveling guest
 Be tendered, ere he journeys farther West.
 While o'er such scenes, like winds o'er waves asleep,
 May startling incidents unlooked-for sweep!

Upon yon knoll, where scarce a grave is made,
 A crowd of villagers will yet be laid;
 While many a mourner there in turn will mourn,
 As frail mortality is thither borne.

In vain the parson pleading there in tears,
 As each one still in silence disappears;
 In vain exhorting, still in vain distressed,
 Till he and they, alike, have sunk to rest.
 Yet up the village structures meet the skies,
 While busy life teems on with energies!

As Westward opes the path of empire, where,
 Mingling, the Old World and the New repair;
 As still migrating throngs are farther seen
 Beyond, where wildernesses intervene,
 Still will our eager hopes with joy extend,
 To mark, where ever-gathering millions blend,
 A great and gallant people rise, whose reign,
 As freemen, through long ages may remain!

Forgotten ne'er, that when the Ancient World
 Was from her lofty fame and freedom hurled,
 Caused by dishonor and the guilty stealth
 Of free-born privilege in the commonwealth,
 The darkened years of history began,
 And man became the prey of tyrant man.

Muse of our wildwoods Land! though small thy claim
 To win the garlands of a liberal fame,
 Unskilled, may be, to tune the ready LAY
 Of ONWARD, sounding on the Nation's day:
 Still be our joy to hail with eager eyes
 Thy Country's boast—the FRONTIER VILLAGE RISE!
 The forests fall where woodsman's echo wakes,
 The hills and valleys smile; roads, rivers, lakes,
 Teem with the transit of abundant trade,
 As o'er a world their commerce is conveyed.

Muse of our wildwoods West! O, still prolong
 The rising numbers of our swelling song,
 To sunrise multitudes, while they remote,
 Responding fitly to the earnest note,
 Wake anthems o'er a people's peerless morn,
 A nation's glory where its strength is born!

Adieu, fair Village! May undimmed renown
 Thy more than hopeful future ever crown!
 A hundred centuries, thy halls still be
 The home of virtue, cradle of the free!

Long may'st thou sit in native, queenly pride,
A fadeless flower by the pure wave's side;
A lovely gem, in kindling radiance dressed,
Glittering remotely from our glorious West!
And whether where Missouri's confluents pour,
Or, on the wild Pacific's sounding shore,
Or farther, where our eagles yet may rise
O'er other solitudes, through other skies,
Still long, where'er their pinions wave in pride,
A people's stayless destiny to guide,
The nobly RISING be thy honored name,
And ne'er DESERTED blot thy growing fame!







N O T E S .

Note 1—Page 6.

“Around are closing in the white man’s fields,
He, e’en in turn, at length dominion yields!”

The silent, sorrowful departure of the Indian, upon the encroaching stir of settlements, is a scene often witnessed on our Western frontier. Lingered for a time in mute amazement, like the wild animal, to gaze upon the invaders; he at length disappears in the depths of the forests.

Note 2—Page 7.

“His dogs and gun, companions of his way,
The restless LEATHER-STOCKING of his day!”

The early hunter, or trapper, the first partially resident white man with the Indian—termed by Cooper the “Leather-Stocking”—has always been a distinct character on our frontier, still penetrating farther into the wilderness as the settlements advance.

Note 3—Page 8.

“But vain to tell whence severally they hail,
The wide world sends them from each hill and dale.”

It often happens that only in a comparatively small frontier village, persons are found from almost every State, as well as emigrating nation abroad.

Note 4—Page 11.

“The cobbler beats an *alto* to the din.”

The sound of the shoemaker beating upon his lap-stone pervades the general noises with striking effect.

Note 5—Page 12.

“A greatness, grandeur, wonder, and a might,
Where such ennobling energies unite.”

The systematic haste and success with which a village—especially in mining districts—is often reared, and an harmonious routine of life entered upon, before the restraints of law have yet been established, very truthfully often excites a wonder and a pride, as it properly should, when it is recollected how diverse, by remote birth and education, is the material there collected for a community.

Note 6—Page 12.

“Then pipes the partridge in the harvest time—
Then calls the crow where forests once were dense—

Then barks the squirrel by the cornfield fence—
 Then hums the honey-bee the wild flowers o'er—
 Then springs the plantain by the settler's door—
 Then sings the whippowil at evening's close—
 Joyous companions where the white man goes!"

These are familiarly said to accompany the settlements; but the bee and the plantain only probably do. The others but increase with their approach.

Note 7—Page 13.

"A moment gaze, and turn with fleeter flight."

The village suddenly reared upon the banks of the solitary stream, where the returning trapper or mountaineer does not expect to meet it, or beside the path of the timid buffalo, or wild horse, alike startles and drives each into deeper solitudes.

Note 8—Page 18.

"No Auburn griefs shall over-gloom the soil,
 Nor peasant's pangs commingle with his toil,
 The poor man still shall claim his 'rood of ground,'
 Nor foreign title, foreign pomp be found."

To the Old World belongs the DESERTED VILLAGE, with its characteristic legendary histories and humble life. To the New, as emphatically belongs its counterpart—the RISING VILLAGE, in striking contrast in all its details. The former is seen to remain the fixed abode of indigence and unpretending ambition, probably for genera-

tions, or until some decree of Government, or change in ancestral estate, dooms it to decline and desertion. On the contrary, here on our Western borders collects a community, guided hither as by the hand of destiny—the representatives of every State, emigrating climate, and country ; and by force of the same will and untiring energy that brought them here, a village springs up, as by magic, under their hands, in the midst of unbroken wilds. While under experiences, as widely gathered as their wide-spread birth, in the enjoyment not only of a free Government, but the greater freedom of a Western frontier, are born that enterprise, energy, and courage, which characterize American life, and other great elements of Republican government.

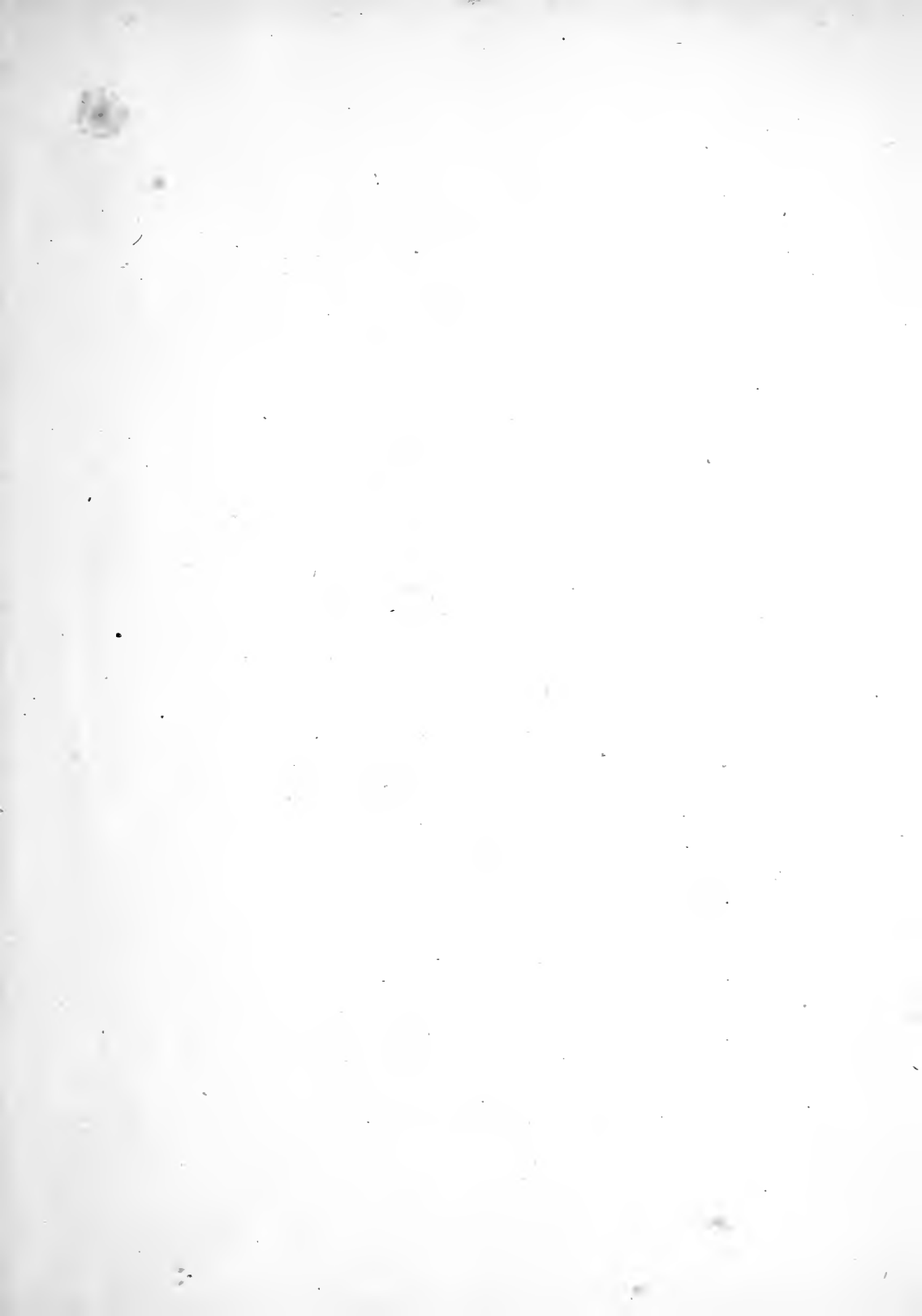












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